

VZCZCXRO2802
PP RUEHTRO
DE RUEHAS #0434 1111616
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 201616Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5643
INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2673
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 8894
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 2295
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 7148
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 6332
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 1566
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0517
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA 3369
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 000434

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2018
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [AG](#)
SUBJECT: INTERIOR MINISTER CRITICIZES NGOS AS UNHELPPFUL
AGENTS OF FOREIGN POWERS

REF: ALGIERS 357

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Thomas F. Daughton;
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Speaking during a parliamentary session held April 9, Interior Minister Nouredine Yazid Zerhouni stated that "international NGOs coming to Algeria are neither helping nor building the country." He asked MPs why they would work with such NGOs since they only came to Algeria for money. Zerhouni went on to accuse unnamed international NGOs of "interfering" in Algeria's internal affairs.

ATTACKING THE ORANGE REVOLUTION

¶2. (C) According to Hamid Lounaouci, a member of parliament with the opposition Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), Zerhouni also presented NGOs as agents of foreign interests who look at Algeria as "minor" and seek to foment the equivalent of the "Orange Revolution" that occurred in Ukraine. (Comment: For Zerhouni, an Orange Revolution in Algeria would apparently be a bad thing. End Comment.) Zerhouni was open in expressing his regret that some foreign NGOs -- he did not specify which ones -- are given full freedom to operate in Algeria, and wondered aloud about their intention to teach Algerians the principles of transparency, democracy and good governance. Zerhouni then mentioned an unnamed European Union organization that had proposed in 2002 to contribute 200,000 Euros to an Algerian government program aimed at returning populations to rural areas vacated during the violence of the 1990s. Zerhouni complained the organization imposed a condition that the money could only be granted to local associations and not to the government, while the overall project could only be overseen by the European NGO itself.

BUT STILL NO FINGERPRINTS

¶3. (C) Our NGO contacts have repeatedly told us that while they sense a general abstract hostility towards civil society, they continue to operate freely and have not faced any obstacles to cooperating with foreigners. Abdelmalek Boualem, president of ASP Boudiaf, told us on April 14 that his NGO has not faced any troubles with the Algerian government. He added that his NGO has launched several development programs recently in cooperation with the EU and will not hesitate to deal with any foreign organization in

the future that shares his goals. Nafissa Lahreche, president of Femmes en Communication, also told us on April 14 that her NGO has not been hindered in any way recently nor has it received any instructions not to deal with foreigners.

Meanwhile, Kamel Daoud, director of the Center for Documentation and Information on Human Rights (CDDH) in Annaba, told us on April 16 that his center was lucky to have been granted legal status almost 20 years ago at "a moment of opportunity." Other groups in Annaba, such as a loose association of single mothers and another group representing families of disappeared harraga (illegal emigrants), requested official status as long as two years ago, but have not even been given a receipt for their applications, Daoud said. As a result, the CDDH had become a small "oasis" where ad-hoc groups in need of space and resources could gather.

COMMENT: SMOKE AND MIRRORS

14. (C) The recent statements by Zerhouni reveal a core of the Algerian leadership that is deeply suspicious about foreign activity in the country and insecure about its position, despite wealth that is approaching USD 120 billion in foreign exchange reserves. Zerhouni, like Prime Minister Belkhadem, has not been shy to use the media and public statements to attack the Embassy and civil society organizations across the board (reftel), resulting in a general perception that NGOs and foreign embassies are being warned to tread carefully. Where Zerhouni appears to be reluctant to leave fingerprints, however, is in actually issuing written instructions enforcing his statements.

FORD